

JT Development Solutions Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

JT Development Solutions Limited (JTDS), established in 2010, delivers programmes for employers who pay the apprenticeship levy. Recruitment onto programmes began in May 2018. It currently has 125 apprentices employed by nine companies in a range of locations including Newcastle, Hartlepool, Leeds, York, Sheffield, Norwich, London and Bristol. Just under three quarters of apprentices are on standards-based programmes. Four fifths of apprentices study at level 3 and the rest mostly study at level 5. The main subjects are team leadership and management. A few apprentices study other programmes, including sales, security services and customer services. JTDS does not subcontract any of the provision to other organisations.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers do not ensure that employers provide apprentices with their entitlement to relevant, high-quality off-the-job training. They do not have sufficiently strong systems in place to monitor the volume of off-the-job training that apprentices receive or the type of activities that they undertake. The largest employer provides its own in-house computer-based training for all staff, covering topics such as money laundering, fraud and dealing with vulnerable customers. Although the training activities are relevant to apprentices' job roles, not all are directly relevant to the apprenticeship standards. However, when apprentices log their off-the-job learning hours, they often include these activities. This artificially inflates the volume of off-the-job training that they complete. In other cases, apprentices do not maintain logs.

Managers have not developed effective systems to measure the progress that apprentices make. As a result, senior leaders do not have sufficient information on apprentices' progress with which to hold managers and assessors to account for their performance. Managers do not intervene swiftly enough when apprentices fall behind on their programmes. When training officers leave the organisation, managers do

not have comprehensive and accurate information on the progress of their caseload of apprentices. Consequently, they spend time establishing this information with apprentices, rather than focusing on the delivery of new learning.

Quality assurance arrangements are not effective enough in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observations of training do not focus sufficiently on the progress of apprentices. The timescales for improvement actions, following observations, are too open-ended. Consequently, managers do not review their completion quickly enough. When managers do identify quality improvement actions, they act too slowly to implement them to bring about rapid improvement. For example, managers identified in September 2018 that apprentices did not have individual learning plans and that the quality of the feedback to apprentices was not strong. They had not resolved these issues by the time of the monitoring visit, five months later.

Leaders and managers work well with employers at a strategic level to provide programmes that meet employers' workforce development needs. For example, a large national company that employs over half of the apprentices uses its apprenticeship levy funding to recruit new employees into first-tier jobs. It also provides training for existing staff being prepared for promotion into supervisory and management posts. Leaders and managers meet frequently with employers, who value their constant feedback and their responsiveness to requests for information.

Leaders and managers engage employers well in selecting appropriate apprenticeship programmes, and units within qualifications, to enable apprentices to develop new skills and knowledge. For example, managers identified the level 2 customer service supervisory standard as way of recruiting new staff into an area of an employer's business. Attracting new staff to this area had previously been challenging.

Leaders and managers ensure that training officers have relevant knowledge of the vocational areas in which they deliver, and that they have suitable qualifications as assessors. A few training officers also have teaching qualifications. Training officers are qualified to support apprentices' development of English and mathematical skills. Staff undertake appropriate professional development to update and extend their knowledge, particularly around the development of new apprenticeship standards and end-point assessments.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Insufficient progress

Training officers do not consistently use the results of the assessment of apprentices' starting points to plan and deliver learning programmes that challenge all apprentices. Generic learning plans are in place for each apprenticeship standard, but, in too many instances, training officers do not tailor the plans to take into

account individual apprentices' prior knowledge or experience. Many apprentices have already completed related qualifications at a lower level and have covered similar topics before. In too many instances, apprentices refresh their existing knowledge but are not consistently challenged to reach their full potential.

Most apprentices receive insufficient, relevant off-the-job learning and therefore do not make the progress of which they are capable. Although apprentices have monthly individual coaching and review sessions with their training officers, they have very little allocated additional time in working hours to complete the assignments, research and written work required for their studies. When apprentices join the programme, their line managers are fully involved and supportive, but apprentices frequently have a change of manager. Subsequent managers are often less knowledgeable about the programme. They are not supportive enough in organising apprentices' workloads to accommodate study time. This applies particularly to apprentices working in call centres, where managers give priority to work targets, rather than the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. Most of the small number of higher-level management apprentices manage their own diaries to find time to study during quiet periods at work. However, this time still falls significantly short of their entitlement.

Training officers' feedback on apprentices' work does not include precise information on how to improve. It is often a list of what they have covered, with no specific information on what they did well or suggestions for raising the standard of their work. Training officers do not point out grammatical and spelling errors in apprentices' written work, and so apprentices continue to make the same mistakes.

The large majority of apprentices benefit from effective on-the-job training that helps them to develop their skills and knowledge. They supplement this training with independent study in their own time. Training officers provide good support for apprentices to develop their personal skills, including confidence and self-awareness, which enhance their work performance. The few apprentices who need to complete qualifications in English and mathematics benefit from intensive support to prepare them for their assessments.

Line managers provide apprentices with good opportunities to apply their knowledge in the workplace, through the completion of projects and practical activities. For example, apprentices working in the security industry have introduced a safety marshal system at work to raise the awareness of staff about potential risks. Others have streamlined the workflow and increased efficiency. Employers value the increasing contribution that apprentices make to their business.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have ensured that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and that apprentices feel safe and are safe at work. The managing

director holds the role of designated safeguarding officer and a deputy is in place. Both have completed appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their roles.

JTDS has an effective incident reporting system, which staff and apprentices know how to use. A recent incident, reported by a training officer following a visit to the workplace, highlighted concerns regarding apprentices' understanding of local risks. As a result, the employer updated its health and safety induction for apprentices, and staged a test evacuation of its premises, to ensure that newly employed apprentices know what to do in an emergency.

Managers follow safe recruitment procedures. All staff, irrespective of their roles within the organisation, receive an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check before taking up their posts. JTDS renews the checks every three years, in line with its safeguarding policy. Staff complete mandatory safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training, as part of their initial induction to the company, and update it annually.

Apprentices have a high level of awareness of the risks posed to them by radicalisation and extremism. Training officers check and develop their understanding during monthly meetings. This complements the training provided by many employers.

Managers have been slow to establish links with external agencies responsible for co-ordinating 'Prevent' duty activities in the regions in which they work. The company's 'Prevent' duty action plan acknowledges the need to establish links with external agencies but does not specify further details. However, managers have recently made initial contact with external representatives to receive 'Prevent' duty updates.

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